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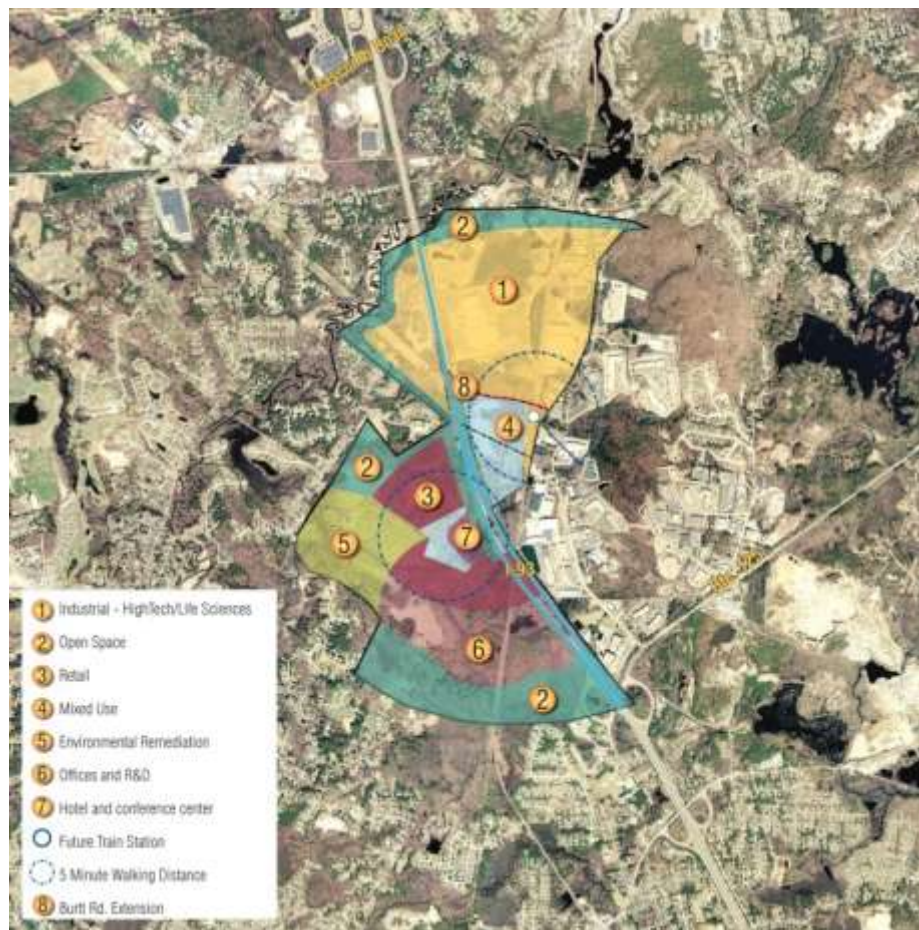
DRAFT STATEMENT OF A PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE JUNCTION/RT. 93 INTERCHANGE

A REGIONAL VISION

The three communities of Andover, Tewksbury, and Wilmington, sitting together as a regional entity on the Tri-Town Task Force, have adopted a sustainable vision for the preservation and future development of land along the I-93 interstate highway corridor in the Lowell Junction area.

Tri-Town Unified Vision:

To facilitate the development of these 700 land-locked acres into a sustainable mixed-use corridor that supports smart-growth centers that will enable businesses, residents, and the town to receive significant benefits while mitigating current constraints.



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The Tri-Town Unified Vision generally contemplates the following actions:

- Making over 500 acres of land appropriate for sustainable development after providing proper access. The concept is anchored with mixed commercial and industrial projects - as existing uses, expansions and proposed development -together with open space and recreation, transit, and other smart growth projects, as mutually supportive uses and a balanced investment of public and private funds.
- Restoring and preserving existing residential neighborhoods in all three communities to further historic preservation and previous private investments, partially accomplished through the diversion of new traffic and better management of existing traffic flows.
- Programming investments in traditional and alternative modes of transportation, implemented under a coordinated approach that supports long-term accessibility and mobility throughout the corridor.
- Investing in transportation infrastructure crucial to the current and future businesses that provide the foundation for the proposed life sciences and high technology corridor by enabling better access to the corridor and strengthen connections to the New England and regional markets.
- Improving the environment, including the restoration of Sutton Brook and remediation of the adjacent former landfill, and providing new public access and preserving land along the Shawsheen River.
- Ensuring sustainable design with maximum efficiency in the use of the land. The development projects will include green design and utilize energy efficient and low-impact construction under new design guidelines.

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ESTABLISHING THE PURPOSE AND NEED

The Purpose of the proposed action - to create new interstate highway access at the Lowell Junction, as an element in a package of other local, state, and federal highway improvements – will provide the required mobility and accessibility that allow achievement of the unified vision of the three communities on the Tri-Town Task Force.

As noted in the *Lowell Junction Interchange Study*, prepared for the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission and finalized July 2006, existing congestion, growth, and the impacts to the local road system lead to a decision that a new interchange should be built to meet the goals of the vision:

“The proposed Lowell Junction Interchange will provide significant regional transportation improvements in one of the state’s major employment areas. It will relieve congestion at two existing interchanges and will reduce traffic through the Ballardvale residential neighborhood. Because of improved access it will reduce congestion and delay. .. The analyses substantiate the case for providing an additional break in access along the Interstate Highway System consistent with the requirements of the Federal Highway Administration and the policies of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.”

The following summary points categorize the reasoning and justification for the proposed action. These include short-term needs for safety as well as long-term needs (20 to 25 years and more) for economic development and improved transportation management.

System linkage

- Overall planning for the corridor has been laid out in the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission’s *Final Route I-93 Corridor Study*, prepared with support from the Massachusetts Highway Department and the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority, and prepared by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin in October 2005. The plan details a program of projects from Andover/ Tewksbury to the New Hampshire border, including improvements to the mainline, interchanges, intersections, rail service, bus service and Transportation Demand Management. The proposed action will remain consistent with this plan as well as more recent updates of the plan.

Capacity/transportation demands

- Relief from the existing limited access and congestion for businesses and residents would be provided with the implementation of the planned interchange combined with local road improvements. It is projected that the proposed interchange would reduce congestion on existing roadways, especially Route 125, Ballardvale Street, River Street, Clark Road, and Dascomb Road. The local road improvements that must be implemented to enable the vision to be fulfilled include the completion of the Route 125 upgrade and the implementation of the Burr Road Extension.

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- The project may not be able to substantially change the projected level of service for the mainline of I-93 in the year 2025 projections because of regional traffic growth. However, the project can focus the priorities for transportation investments on improving the existing infrastructure where I-93 provides the best opportunity to meet the accessibility goals of the project and the vision of the Tri-Town Task Force.
- The project will support, and therefore avoid deterioration, of the level of service at other current public investments in highway improvements, such as the Exit 41/Route 125 slip ramp.
- While normal growth may change traffic volumes, the project will not be designed for highway improvements that require adding new vehicle trips onto existing local residential streets. Those existing residential streets are: South Street in Tewksbury, Salem Street in Wilmington, and Clark Street, Andover Street and River Street in the BallardVale neighborhood in Andover.

Legislative demands

- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is advancing programs with significant funding to support expansion of biotechnology industry sectors, sustainable development, and overall job generation. These programs regionally rely on the businesses within the existing Lowell Junction industrial area that match these target sectors to expand and grow. Public improvements in transportation infrastructure will support the planned land use program.

Socio-economic demands and economic development

- The Tri-Town Task Force unified vision includes a mix of projects for economic development, including life sciences, high technology, mixed use, and residential neighborhoods that require interstate access:
 - A proposed life sciences and high technology corridor with a mix of sustainable development is envisioned. The life sciences and high technology corridor is anchored by the existing businesses such as: Wyeth BioPharma; Proctor & Gamble; AGFA, and Charles River Laboratories, and will be supplemented with new biotech, commercial, and mixed use projects, projected to encompass approximately 3.6 million square feet of new building space. This will generate significant tax revenues for the towns and provide a total of over 12,000 jobs.
 - Land use in the corridor will also meet the growing market demand for mixed-use development. This could include village centers that cluster retail amenities for the surrounding businesses and residents, residential, office or desired industrial space. The inclusion of an estimated 250-bed hotel and conference center to meet regional needs will also support the area businesses as well as bring additional visitors to the area.

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- Due to the close proximity to Boston - a region with over 75 institutions of higher education and innovative research - the corridor will provide an attractive opportunity to recruit and retain a highly educated work force. With improved access to employment opportunities, the region surrounding this corridor will become more attractive to the potential employees and residents who seek these job opportunities.
- The surrounding region provides high quality living environments that provide access to housing for all income levels because of the recent completion of large, affordable housing projects. The preservation of the existing and future residential neighborhoods is critical to the long term socio-economic conditions of the region.

Modal interrelationships:

- The proposed action will support a long-term program to provide access for a potential commuter rail station, supported with future double-tracking of the Haverhill Commuter Rail line.
- The proposed action will support a long-term program to provide access for a potential park-and-ride facility.
- The proposed action will allow provision for an I-93 corridor bus system, including BRT, supported after monitoring activity at the Anderson Regional Transportation Center to determine further program development.
- The proposed action will support the long-term programs to further promote Transportation Demand Management, particularly through the existing Transportation Management Organizations.

Safety

- The proposed action will provide near-term, direct, secondary access ways to existing industrial businesses to address concerns for safety and emergency access. The existing businesses are currently constrained by access limitations that at a minimum require the completion of the Rt. 125 upgrades and the construction of the Burt Rd. Extension. These in turn must be coordinated with the need for further long-term improvements to the transportation system to maintain the value of the investment.

Roadway deficiencies – The existing roadway system does not provide the proper accessibility and mobility. The proposed action will:

- Support the long-term program to reduce congestion around the Route 125 interchange/ Exit 41.
- Support the long-term program to reduce traffic at Dascomb Road interchange / Exit 42.
- Support the long-term program to reduce traffic flow on residential streets in the historic BallardVale neighborhood.

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- Provide access for the Sutton Brook landfill remediation.
- Support the completion of the following additional improvements to the corridor:
 - I-93 Widening;
 - Interchange improvements at exits 43, 44, 46, and 47/48;
 - Intersection signal timing changes at exits 42 (for LOS F to A/B), 43, 45, 46, and 47.

Mitigation and environmental improvements – Although the project may include some environmental impacts, the action also allows significant environmental improvements and benefits:

- New accessibility for public recreation and passive enjoyment along the Shawsheen River.
- Restoration of the Sutton Brook and remediation at the ‘Rocco’ landfill superfund remediation project.
- Protection of wetlands by providing access to upland portions of the corridor through the proposed actions.
- Sustainable building programs with the application of design guidelines under the existing and improved regulatory processes.